**Exhibit Synopsis Prepared for ROPEX 2017**

# Along the Shantung Railway, China; German Postal Administration 1900 - 1914

**EXHIBIT:** This single frame postal history exhibit uses covers and their postal markings to follow the development of the German postal system associated with The Shantung Railway during its construction and after its completion.

**BACKGROUND TO THE EXHIBIT:** In 1898 Germany and China entered into a treaty through which Germany obtained a lease of Kiautschou Bay and adjacent land area. A fifty Kilometer (km) "Neutral Zone" was established around the bay in which China could not change laws without German approval. Concessions for establishment of railroads and of mining rights within Shantung province were granted to Germany.

Between 1900 and 1904 a Germany company constructed a railway with a mainline of 395 km (245 mi) from the port of Tsingtau in the leased territory to the Shantung provincial capital of Tsinanfu. During early construction, German Marines were sent into the neutral zone to put down unrest brought on by the construction. Military field post offices were established to serve these men, and they later became civilian post offices of the Kiautschou postal system. Once the railway opened, a special railcar on each through train held a railway post office that accepted mail at stations along the railway. As the railway construction proceeded, temporary railway postal agencies were established near the railhead at construction bases. Also, during the construction period, four regular German post offices in China were opened in towns along the railroad. Each of these developments is represented by covers in this exhibit.

**IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC:** Kiautschou was Germany's only leased territory. All other overseas German territories were conventional colonies. The Shantung railway passed from the leased territory, where Germany held essentially total, if temporary, sovereignty through a neutral zone of ambiguous sovereignty into Chinese territory proper where Germany held only concession rights. The Chinese considered the establishment of German postal installations beyond the leased territory to be infringements of Chinese sovereignty. Postal regulations, such as the use of Offices-in-China stamps beyond the neutral zone, reflect political compromises between the positions of the two governments.

Over the period covered in this exhibit, these postal developments illustrate a profound change in German government relations with the Chinese. The relationship moved from the confrontational attitude of a colonial power to become a cooperative working agreement between two sovereign nations. The exhibit starts with field post offices established to serve German Marines sent into the neutral zone to protect railway construction and ends with the removal of all German troops from beyond the leased territory, the assignment of responsibility for protection of the railroad to Chinese police, and the closing of four German post offices. It is a remarkable story of an evolving international relationship which is well reflected in the postal developments documented in this exhibit.

**PLAN OF THE EXHIBIT:** The exhibit is arranged chronologically. Since four different railway post office cancellations were introduced as the railway extended into China, the periods of use of each of those cancellations provide logical divisions for the exhibit.

The covers in each section of the exhibit have been selected to allow an explanation of one aspect of the railway postal system or the postal markings. This design introduces variety among the sections and allows a separate discussion of different aspects of the history of the railway and the nature of the railway postal system as each is reflected in the postal history. These covers have often received praise for their quality. They represent the best of over fifty years of collecting, and, in most cases, are among the finest available.

Part 1 contains an explanation of the military and civilian post offices in the neutral territory and their use of military postmarks.

Part 2 includes a discussion of the kinds of stations serviced by the railway post office.

Part 3 explains the use either of the postage of the Kiautschou Leased Territory or that of the German Offices-in-China at different locations along the railway.

Part 4 explains the significance of "Zug 1" or "Zug 2" (Train 1 or Train 2) in the railway post office cancel.

Finally, Part 5 considers political changes represented by the postal history.

A sketch map appears on most pages to indicate the location along the railway of material presented on that page. Although the exhibit received a creativity award for that concept, I also received comments that it was confusing. A map key is now on page 1.1 along with the first map.

**ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:**

***One of only two known registered covers with the Tsingtau-Kiautschou Bahnpost Cancel (new discovery by exhibitor)***

Part two of this exhibit includes an example of a registered letter accepted by the railway post office. While this service was, in theory, routine, few letters received such service. This was particularly true during opening days of the railway system during the period of use of the Tsingtau - Kiautschou railway post office cancel. One surviving registered letter accepted by the railway post office during this period has been reported in the literature. [*See*, Sandner (listed below), page 32].

The example in this exhibit has not previously been reported. It became available at auction last year. Its significance was not noted in the auction description but was recognized by this exhibitor.

***The only known wartime cover with the Railway Post Office postmark***

The final page of this exhibit, which describes the end of the railway postal service, includes this card. It bears the last date known on cover of the Shantung Railway postmark. It also is the only known cover with this postmark with a wartime date. With the start of the World War the Trans-Siberian railway route was closed to German mail. After reaching Tsingtau from Tsinanfu by train, this card was then forwarded to Germany by sea via the then neutrals, Japan and America (instructions written to the left of the stamp, "via Japan und Amerika").

This unique item was part of a well-known, remarkable collection of German Colonies material owned by a collector in Germany. It became available late last year.

Ex Knieper

**WHY SOME ITEMS ARE NOT HERE:** While this exhibit includes an example of every cancellation relevant to the story of the development of the postal system, some varieties are intentionally omitted. In the preopening period there were variations in the field post cancels. These do not represent changes in postal administration and their inclusion would overemphasize cancel details rather than their significance. Similarly, I have neither mentioned nor included every subtle variation in the railway post office cancellations not noted in the standard cancel catalogs.

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## BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Understandably the technical articles I relied on in preparing this exhibit are in German. Unfortunately, the best background material is as well. I have listed what I believe to be the most useful English language material. I have also listed one recent German language reference.

I have made an attempt to make this material more readily available by donating a copy of the Sandner/Detering pamphlet (in German) to the APRL and by deposited a folder containing copies of the English language references 2 and 3 and of the cited pages in reference 1a (English translation) with the Library

The standard of German Colonial Philately is the Friedemann Handbook. This five volume set was translated by members of the German Colonies Collectors Group, USA, ("GCCG") in 1977-79. While this translation had limited distribution by agreement with the copyright holder, a copy is available in the APRL. All page references are to the GCCG English language edition.


1. Wittmann, H, (Editor and Reviser) *Friedemann Handbuch,* 3d ed. Privately published by Wittmann, Munich 1967. (In German).

1a English translation by, and published by, the German Colonies Collectors Group (1977-1979). See particularly Kiautschou Section pp 1-4; (background), pp. 36-38 (Shantung Railway), and p 35 (Field-Post), and in the China Section pp 67-71 (Shantung Railway).


While the following article by Wittneben which appeared in the GCCG publication *Vorläufer* in 1975 and the related note by Davis which appeared therein in 1981 contain some errors in their details, and while our knowledge has expanded over the past thirty years, together they remain the only good summary of the topic of this exhibit available in English.


2. Wittneben, Udo (Revised and illustrated by Col. Wilbur E. Davis), "Kiautschou and the Shantung Railway," *Vorläufer,* Number 16, pp. 13-20, June 1975. (In English).

3. Davis, Wilbur E; (untitled auction report discussing the railway postal agency postmarks) *Vorläufer,* Number 49, pp. 10-11, April 1981. (In English).


Finally, although it is available only in German, I have listed the Sandner and Dettering pamphlet as it is by far the most complete and best researched publication available on this topic.


4. Sandner,H. and Detering,K , *Die Schantungbahn und ihre Poststempel,* Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Sammler deutsche Kolonialpostwertzeichen ("ARGE") Berlin 2003.

   Pamphlet 5 in ARGE's Deutschen Kolonialphilatelic series. Excellent Shantung Railway history (Detering) and complete discussion of the railway cancels (Sandner). (In German).


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